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BY CAVIS & TRIMMIE.

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THE DOUBLE HOUSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

CONCLUDED.

On the evening of the day on which Mrs. Merchiston wrote to tell her husband that she designed to leave him, she came to my house. She looked white and shivering, but not with cold. Her poor blue eyes, so warm and kind, had a frosty glitter in them that was strange and sad.

"No answer," she kept repeating, "no answer—now. Now I must go."

I replied that everything was ready; our gig would be at the door in a minute; it was a bright moonlight night, and I myself would accompany her to my sister's house.

"It is not far—not so very far, Mrs. Rivers," I said, "not so far but that I can always hear of him, or—if he should be ill at any time—"

"You can come home at once,"

"Home!" she echoed pitiously. Then, as if stung into one desperate effort—the last struggle of her tender and feeble nature—she sprang into the gig, I following her.

I was scarcely seated, reins in hand—before I was determined that no other than myself should have the credit of eloping with Mrs. Merchiston—than I felt on my right arm a grasp like a vice.

"Mrs. Rivers, whom have you there? Is it your wife?"

"Yes, Dr. Merchiston," I cried, not in the least frightened by the look and tone; "yes, it is your wife. I am taking her where she will live—in peace, and not be killed by inches any longer. Stand aside; let me drive on."

"In one moment, pardon me," he passed in front of the horse to the other side. "Barbara? Is that you, Barbara?"

No words could describe the ineffable tenderness, the longing anguish, of that voice. No wonder that it made her grasp my arm, and cry wildly on me to stop.

"It is not ten minutes since I had your letter, Barbara, grant me one word in the presence of this lady, by whose advice you are leaving your husband."

"By whose advice did you leave your wife, Dr. Merchiston?" I began, boldly; but by the carriage lamp I caught sight of his face, and it seemed like that of a man literally dying—dying of despair. "Mrs. Merchiston, we will re-enter my house for a while. Doctor, you lift your wife down! She has fainted."

Soon the poor lady was sitting in my parlor, I by her side. Dr. Merchiston stood opposite, watching us both. He was neither violent nor reproachful, but perfectly silent. Nevertheless, I felt somewhat uncomfortable, and glad from my heart that James was safe ten miles off, and that I alone had been mixed up with this affair.

"She is better now, Mrs. Rivers. I may speak, sir."

"I will pass over my present trying position. Of course I perceive—in fact, I was already aware—that Mrs. Merchiston has acquiesced with our sad, inevitable estrangement."

"Why inevitable!—when there has been no quarrel on either side? When, cruel as you have been to her, she has never breathed a word to your discredit?" (He growled.) "When, as I understand, you have not the shadow of blame to urge against her?"

Before heaven, none. Have I not declared this, and will I not declare it before all the world? She knows I will.

"Then why, my dear sir, in the name of all that is good and honorable—why, even in the name of common sense, is your estrangement inevitable?"

He seemed to cower and shudder as before some inexpressible dread—once he glanced wildly round the room, as if with the vague idea of escaping. Finally, he forced himself to speak, with a smile that was most painful to witness.

"Mrs. Rivers, even though a lady asks me, I cannot answer that question."

"Can you if your wife herself asks it? I will leave you together."

As I rose to go, Dr. Merchiston interposed. The cold sweat stood on his brow; he looked—yes, I thought so at that moment—like a possessed man struggling with his inward demon.

"For God's sake, no! For the love of mercy, no! Stay by her; take care of her. I will speak in your presence; I will not detain you long."

"Do not see," for the poor wife was again insensible. Dr. Merchiston rushed to her side; he chafed her hands; he fell on his knees before her; but as she opened her eyes he crept away, and put the room's length between them.

"Now may I speak? You wished to leave me, Barbara. To go whither?"

I told him, concealing nothing. He seemed greatly shocked.

"Mrs. Rivers," he said at length, "such a scheme is impossible. I will never consent to it. If she desires, she shall leave my house for yours or any other. She shall have all the luxuries she pleases; she shall be as free from me as if I were dead and she a widow. But that my wife should quit my roof to earn her daily bread—never."

From this decision there was no appeal. The wife evidently desired none; her eyes began to shine with joy, and even I took hope.

"But, Dr. Merchiston, can there be no change? You loved one another once. Love is not yet dead; love never wholly dies. Surely—"

"Madame, silence!"

Could it be his voice that spoke—his once calm, low voice? I was now really terrified.

He rose and walked about the room; we two sat trembling. At last he stopped in his old position, with his hand on the mantelpiece.

"Mrs. Rivers, my extremely painful position—you will acknowledge it is such—must excuse anything in me unbecoming, unaccounted."

I assured him he had my free pardon for any excitement, and I hoped he felt calmer now.

"Perfectly, perfectly; you must see that, do you not?"

"I do," said I, with a sense of bitterness against the whole race of mankind, who can drive poor woman-kind almost out of their senses, while they themselves preserve the most sublime composure.

"I will now, with your permission and in your presence, speak to my wife, Barbara"—in a quiet equal tone, as if addressing an ordinary person—"I told you five years ago that it is not I who am inexorable, but fate, even if the life we then began to lead should last until my death. I repeat the same now. Yet, for those five years you have been at peace and safe. Safe," he repeated, with a slight pause, "under my roof, where I can shelter and protect you better than anywhere else."

"Protect her?" And then I told him—how could I help it? of the sights and outrages to which their manner of life had exposed her. It was terrible to see the effect produced on him.

"Hush! tell me no more, or—Barbara, forgive me—forgive me that I ever made you my wife. There is but one atonement; shall I make you my widow?"

"Doctor Merchiston," I cried, catching his arm, "are you mad?"

He started, shuddering, and in a moment had recovered all his self-control.

"Mrs. Rivers, this is a state of things most terrible, of which I was totally ignorant. How is it to be remedied—granting, as you must grant, the one unalterable necessity."

I thought a minute, and then proposed, to silence the tongue of all Apollate, that the husband and wife should openly walk to church together every Sunday, and kneel together in the house of God. And may I forgive me if in this scheme I had a deeper hope than I betrayed.

"I will do it," said Dr. Merchiston, after a pause. "Barbara, do you consent? Will you come home?"

"I will."

"But to the old life! In nothing changed—for changed it cannot, must not be!"

"Under any circumstances I will come home."

"Thank you; God bless you. It is better so."

There was a quiet pause, broken only by one or two faint sobs from her. At last they ceased. Dr. Merchiston took up his hat to depart. As he was going, his wife started up and caught him by the hand.

"Husband, one word, and I can bear all things. Did I—did you ever love me?"

"Love you? Oh, my little Barbara!"

"Do you love me?"

"Yes," in a whisper, sharp with intolerable pain; "yes."

"Then I do not mind anything. Oh, no, thank God! I do not mind."

She burst into hysterical laughter, and threw herself into my arms. It was only my arms she could come to—her husband was gone.

She went home as she had promised, and the old life began once more—without the slightest change, she told me—save that regularly on Sunday mornings he knocked at the door of communication between the double house, kept always locked on her side by his desire—that she found him waiting in the hall, and they walked arm in arm, as silently and sadly as mourners after a corpse, to the church door. In the same way returning, he immediately parted from her, and went his way to his own apartments.

Apollate was quite satisfied, and circulated innumerable explanations, which had probably as much truth in them as the former accusations.

Dr. Merchiston came as usual to play chess with my husband, and no allusion was ever made to the night which had witnessed so strange a scene in our house.

Mrs. Merchiston improved in health and cheerfulness. To a woman the simple conviction of being loved is support and strength through the most terrible ordeal. Once sure of that, her faith is infinite, her consolation complete. After his "yes," poor little Barbara revived like a flower in the sun.

Not so her husband. Everybody noticed that Dr. Merchiston was wasting away to a shadow. On Sundays especially, his countenance, always sallow and worn, seemed to have the ghastly look of one whom you know to be inwardly fighting a great soul battle. You feel at once the warfare will be won—but the man will die.

And still, as ever, of all the impenetrable mysteries that life can weave, that man and his secret were the darkest.

At least to me. Whether it was so to my husband, whose reserved habits and wide experience of human nature helped to make him what, thank Heaven, he always was—much wiser than me—I do not know but I often caught his grave penetrating eye intently fixed on Dr. Merchiston. So much so, that more than once the doctor moved from it restlessly. But Mr. Rivers redoubled his kindness—in truth, I never knew James, who was very undemonstrative, and usually engrossed between interest in his patients and his domestic affections, attach himself so strongly to any

male friend out of his own home, as he did to Dr. Merchiston.

He seized every opportunity to allure our neighbor from his morbid, solitary doings life to a more wholesome existence. They rode out together on the medical rounds—James trying to interest him in the many, many opportunities of philanthropy with which a country surgeon's life abounds. Sometimes—one day I especially remember—Dr. Merchiston said he thought Mr. Rivers had familiarized him with every possible aspect of human pain.

"Not all—I have yet to show you—indeed, I thought of doing so this morning—the blackest aspect of human suffering can show. And yet, like all suffering, a merciful God has not left it without means of alleviation."

"What do you mean? I thought we were going to some hospital. For what disease?"

"No physical disease, yet one that I believe, like all other diseases, is capable of prevention and cure—mental insanity."

Dr. Merchiston grew as white as this my paper. He said, in a broken, low speech, which vainly tried to seem indifferent—"You are right. But it is a painful subject—insanity."

I do not wonder that my husband tried to change the conversation, and his morning plan likewise. It was evident that in some way the topic strongly affected our friend. Probably he had a relative thus afflicted. And it must be remembered that forty years ago the subject of insanity was viewed in a very different light from what it is at present. Instead of a mere disease, a mental instead of a bodily ailment—yet no less susceptible of remedy—it was looked upon as a visitation, a curse almost a crime. Any family who owned a member thus suffering, hid the secret as if it had been absolute guilt. Mad houses, mad doctors, were words which people shuddered at, or dared not utter. And no wonder! for in many instances they revealed abysses of ignorance, cruelty, and wickedness, horrible to contemplate. Since then, more than one Howard has gone among those worse than prisons, cleared away incalculable evils, and made even such dark places of the earth to see a hopeful dawn.

Throughout his professional career, one of my husband's favorite "crochets," as I called them, had been the investigation of insanity.

Commencing with the simple doctrine, startling, but true, that every man and woman is mad on some one point—that is, has a certain weak corner in the mind or brain, which requires carefully watching like any other weak portion of the body, lest it should become the seat of rampant disease, he went on with a theory of possible cure—one that would take a wiser head than mine to explain, but which effectually removed the intolerable horror, misery, and hopelessness of that great cloud overhanging the civilized and intellectual portion of the world—mental insanity. I do not mean the raving madness which is generally induced by violent passions, and which bygone ages used to regard as a sort of demonic possession—which it may be, for aught I know—but that general state of unsoundness, unhealthiness of brain, which corresponds to unhealthiness of body, and like it, often requires less a physician than a sanitary commissioner.

This may seem an unnecessary didactic interpolation, but I owe it to the natural course of my story, and as a tribute to my dear husband. Besides, it formed the subject of a conversation which, the question being voluntarily revived by Dr. Merchiston, they held together during the whole afternoon.

It was good and pleasant to hear those two men talk. I listened, pleased as a woman who is contented to appreciate that which she herself can never attain. And once more, for the thousandth time, I noted with admiration the wonderfully strong and lucid intelligence with which Dr. Merchiston could grasp any subject, handle it, view it on all points, and make his auditors see it too. Even on this matter, which still seemed to touch his sympathies deeply, especially when he alluded to the world's opinion and cruel treatment of the insane—insane perhaps on some particular point, while the rest of the brain was clear and sound—even there his powers of reasoning and argument never failed.

"Well," said Mr. Rivers, smiling, as they shook hands at the door, "I am glad to have found one who can understand my hobby. You are certainly one of the clear-headed men I ever knew."

"You really think so? I thank you, Rivers," said the doctor, earnestly, as he disappeared in the dark.

I remember this night's conversation vividly, because, in Heaven's inscrutable mercy—ay, I will write "mercy"—it was the last time Dr. Merchiston entered our house.

The next morning he bowed to me at the window, riding past on his gayly curvetting horse, looking better and more cheerful than he had done for a long time.

That evening my husband was summoned to the double house. His master had been thrown from his horse, his leg and his right arm fractured. If all went well, James told me—and I had rarely seen him so moved—the patient would be confined to his bed, bound hand and foot, helpless as a child, for three or four months. Poor Dr. Merchiston!

"Is his wife with him?" was the first question I asked.

"Yes, thank God, yes!" cried James, fairly bursting into tears. I was so shocked, so amazed by his emotion, that I never inquired or learnt to this day how it came about, or what strange scene my husband had that evening witnessed in the double house.

There was a long crisis, in which the balance wavered between life and death. Life triumphed. I went almost every day; but it was long before I saw Mrs. Merchiston. When I did, it was the strangest sight. Her looks were full of the deepest peace, the most seraphic joy. And yet she had

been for weeks a nurse in that sick room. A close, tender, indefatigable nurse, such as none but a wife can be; as fondly watchful—ay, and as gratefully and adoringly watched, my husband told me, by the sick man's dim eyes, as if she had been a wife bound for years in near, continual household bonds, instead of having been totally estranged from him since the first six months of union.

But no one ever spoke or thought of that now.

Dr. Merchiston slowly improved, though he was still totally helpless, and his weakness remained that of a very infant.

In this state he was when I was first admitted to his sick chamber.

Mrs. Merchiston sat at the window sewing. The room was bright and pleasant; she had brought into it all those cheerfulnesses which can alleviate the long to be endured suffering from which all danger is past. When I thought of the former aspect and atmosphere of the house, it did not seem the least sad now; for Barbara's eyes had a permanent, mild, satisfied beam, and her husband's, which were ever dwelling on her face and form, were full of the calmest, most serene happiness.

I sat with them a good while, and did not marvel at his saying ere I left, "that he thoroughly enjoyed being ill."

With what a solemn, sublime evenness of life melted out! Barbara has told me since that those five months following her husband's accident were the most truly happy her life had ever known.

"Look at him," she whispered to me one evening when he lay by the window, half dozing, having been for the first time allowed a faint attempt at locomotion, though he was still obliged to be waited upon hand and foot—"Mrs. Rivers, did you ever see so beautiful a smile? Yet it is nothing compared to that when he was very, very ill, when I first began to nurse and tend him; and he did nothing but watch me about the room, and call me his Barbara. I am here, Evan! Did you call?"

She was at his side in a moment, smoothing his pillow, leaning over and caressing him. I think he was not aware of any one in the room but their two selves, for he fondled her curls and her soft cheeks.

"My Barbara, we have had a little ray of comfort in our sad life. How happy we have been in this sick room!"

"We have been, Evan?"

"Ay; but nothing lasts in this world—nothing!"

"Husband, that is like one of your morbid sayings when we were first married. But I will not have it now—I will not indeed." And she closed his mouth with a pretty pout. He lifted his hand to remove hers, then sunk back.

"Barbara, I am growing strong again; I can use my right arm. O Heaven, my right arm! I am not helpless any longer."

"No, thank God! But you speak as if you were shocked and terrified."

"I am—I am. With strength comes—O my Barbara!"

His wife, alarmed, called out my name. Dr. Merchiston caught at it. "Mrs. Rivers there? Bid her come in, bid anybody come in. Ah! yes, that is well."

After a pause, which seemed more of mental than physical exhaustion, he became himself again for the remainder of the evening.

The next day he sent for me, and in Mrs. Merchiston's absence talked with me a long while about her. He feared her health would give way; he wished her to be more with me; he hoped that I would impress upon her that it made him miserable to see her spending all her days and nights in his sick room.

"What in the only place in the world where she has real happiness?"

"Do you think so? Is she never happy but with me? Then Heaven forgive me! Heaven have pity on me!" he groaned.

"Dr. Merchiston, you surely do not intend to send your wife from you again—your forgiving, loving wife?"

Before he could answer she came in. I went away thoroughly angry and miserable. That evening I indulged James with such a long harangue on the heartlessness of his sex, that, as I said, he must have borne less a man than an angel to have borne it. When I told him the cause, he ceased all general arguments, sat a long time thoughtfully, burning his boots against the bars of the grate, finally sent me to bed, and did not himself follow till midnight.

Dr. Merchiston's cure progressed; in the same ratio his wife's cheerfulness declined. He grew day by day more melancholy, irritable, and cold. By the time he was released from his helpless condition, the icy barrier between them had risen up again. She made no complaint, but the facts were evident.

My husband and I, by his express desire, spent almost every evening at the Double House. Very painful and dreary evenings they were. Convalescence seemed to the poor patient no happiness—only a terror, misery, and pain.

One night, just as we were leaving, making an attempt at cheerfulness—for it was the first feat he had performed at walking, and his wife had helped him across the room with triumphant joy—he said, breaking from a long reverie: "Stay! a few minutes more; I want to speak with you both."

We sat down. He fell back in his chair, and covered his eyes. At length Mrs. Merchiston gently took the hands away.

"Evan, you don't feel so strong as usual to-night?"

"I do; God help me! I do," he muttered. "Would I were weak, and lay on that bed again as powerless as a child. No, Barbara, look, I am strong—well." He stood up, stretching his gaunt right arm, and clenching the hand; then let it drop, and said: "My little Barbara, I must send thee away." He sighed.

"Send me away?"

"Send her away?"

"Peggy," cried my husband in stern reproach, "be silent!"

The poor wife broke out into bitter sobs. "Oh, Evan, what have I done to you? Dear

Evan, let me stay—only till you are well. For, despite what he said about his strength, his countenance, as he lay back, was almost that of a corpse. Barbara's clinging arms seemed to him worse than the grip of a murderer.

"Take her away, Mrs. Rivers; take my poor wife away. You know how she has nursed me; you know whether I love her or not."

"Love her?" I cried, bitterly; but James's hand was upon my shoulder. His eye, which with its gentle firmness could, they said at the hospital, control the most refractory and soothe the most wretched patient, was fixed upon Dr. Merchiston. I saw the old man yield; the bright hectic flush came and went in his cheek.

"Rivers, my good friend, what do you wish me to do?"

"A very simple thing. Tell me—not these poor women—but me, your real reason for acting thus."

"Impossible."

"Not quite. It may be I partly guess it already."

Dr. Merchiston started up with the look of a hunted wild beast in its last despair, but my husband laid his hand on his, in a kind but resolute way.

"Indeed, indeed, you are safe in telling me. Will you?"

The patient hesitated, held up his thin hand to the light with a wan smile, then said, "I will."

James immediately sent us both out of the room.

Mrs. Merchiston was a very woman, gentle and frail. She wept until her strength was gone; then I put her to bed in her maid's charge, and waited until Mr. Rivers ended his conference with her husband.

It was two hours before he came out. At sight of him my torrent of curiosity was dried up; he looked as I had sometimes seen him, coming home from a deathbed. To my few questions he answered not a word.

"But at least," said I, half crying, "at least you might tell me what I am to do with poor Mrs. Merchiston."

"Yes, yes," he thought a minute. "She must go home with us—the sooner the better."

"You agree, then?" I burst out, breathlessly; "you agree to this separation?"

"Entirely."

"You join with her wicked husband in his ingratitude—his brutality?"

"Peggy!" James caught me by the shoulders, with the sternest frown that ever fell on me in all our peaceful married life. "Peggy, may Heaven forgive you! You know not what you are saying."

I was completely awed.

"Mr. Merchiston has told you the secret, and you are determined to keep it?"

"Implicitly while his poor life lasts."

My husband was a man of inviolable honor, and I was not the woman to wish him otherwise, even for me. I urged no more.

During the ten days that Mrs. Merchiston remained in my house, part of the time she was in a sort of fever, which was the happiest thing for her, poor soul. I made not a single inquiry after her husband. I knew that Mr. Rivers was with him at all hours, as doctor, nurse, and friend.

One day, when Mrs. Merchiston was sitting in the parlor with me, he looked in at the door. She did not see him. He quietly beckoned me out.

"Well, James?"

"Speak lower, Peggy, lower; don't let her hear."

And then I saw how much agitated he was; yet even that did not quite remove the bitterness with which I could not help mentioning the name of Dr. Merchiston.

"Peggy, Dr. Merchiston is dying."

I had not expected this; it was a great shock.

"I feared it would be so," continued James; "I have seen him sinking this long time. Now the mind is at peace, but the worn-out body—"

"His wife—his poor wife," was all I could utter.

"Yes, that is what I come to say. She must go to him; he wishes it much. Do you think she will?"

I smiled sadly. "Ah! James, she is a woman."

"And you women can forgive to all eternity—Heaven bless you for it! Besides, she will know the whole truth soon."

I asked not what this "truth" was. What did it matter. He was dying.

"But are you sure, James, there is no hope?"

"None, I believe—and I am almost glad to believe it. There is no man ever knew whom I so deeply pity, and shall so thankfully see gone to his last rest, as Dr. Merchiston."

These were strong words, enough to calm down every wrong feeling, and make me fit to lead the wife to her husband's sick-nay, death chamber.

How we brought her thither I forget. I only remember the moment when we stood within the door.

Dr. Merchiston lay on his bed, as for five long months he had patiently and cheerfully lain. He had something of that old quiet look now, but with a change—the strange awful change which, however fond friends may deceive themselves, is always clearly visible to a colder gaze. You say at once, "That man will die."

When Barbara came into the room, he stretched out his arms with the brightest, happiest smile. She clung to him closely and long. There was no forgiveness asked or bestowed; it was not needed.

"I am so content, my Barbara, content at last!" and he laid his head on her shoulder.

"Evan, you will not part from me again?"

"No—I need not now. They will tell you why it was. You believe—you will always believe how I loved you!"

"Yes."

"Stoop. Let me hold you as I used to do—my wife, my little Barbara. Stoop down—"

She obeyed. He put his feeble arms round her, and kissed her with many kisses, such as he had not given her since she was a six months' bride. Their memory remained sweet on her lips till she was old and gray.

Dr. Merchiston died at the next sunrise, died peacefully in Barbara's arms.

Three days after, when my husband and I stood by the coffin, where for the last few minutes on earth the features which had been so familiar to us for the last two years were exposed to our view, James said, touching the forehead, which was as placid as a dead baby's, with all the wrinkles gone:

"Thank the Lord."

"Why?"

"For his blessed death, in which alone his sufferings could end. He was a monomaniac; and he knew it."

Before speaking again, my husband reverently and tenderly closed the coffin, and led me down stairs.

"He was, as I say, a monomaniac. Mad on one point only, the rest of the mind being clear and sound."

"And that point was—"

"The desire to murder his wife. He told me," pursued James, when my horror had a little subsided, "that it came upon him first in the very honeymoon—beginning with the sort of feeling that I have heard several people say they had at the climax of happiness—the wish there and then to die—together. Afterwards, day and night, whenever they were alone, the temptation used to haunt him. A physician himself, he knew it was a monomania; but he also knew that, if he confessed it, he, sane on all other points, would be treated as a madman, and that his wife, the only creature he loved, would look on him with horror forever. There was but one course to save himself and her; he took it, and never swerved from it."

"But in his illness?"

"Then, being perfectly helpless, he knew he could not harm her, and in great bodily weakness most monomaniacs usually subside. His left him entirely. When he grew stronger it returned. You know the rest. His life was one long torture. Peace be with him now."

"Amen," I said, and went to comfort the widow.

The Pomological Society.

The formation of this society is an important step towards progress in fruit culture, and should meet with general approval and co-operation. It is a lamentable truth, that hitherto the cultivation of fruit has not received the attention it deserves. Because our general climate and fertile soil have favored the production of a great quantity of fruit, with little or no labor, we have grown careless as to quality; and the consequence has been, that our fruit is generally inferior; and if, by chance, a fine variety is cultivated, it speedily degenerates. It is in the power of every owner of an acre of land to furnish himself with a succession of fruits of the finest varieties; and this too, in our climate, with but little labor. Almost every one has fruit trees of some kind or other—but it is too true that the most of it is scarcely "fit to be fed 'nogg." Should this be so? We see old haggard, rotten, neglected, half-dead peach trees standing in every fence corner. Why could not their places be supplied with young, vigorous, healthy trees, of the finest varieties, bearing rich, luscious fruit, and supplying the owner from June to October? The thing is easily done, and a man who will make the experiment, will find his hopes realized in from three to four years, (with the peach.) A good tree, bearing abundant crops of the finest fruit, will occupy no more space—not as much, if properly trained—as the old skeletons, mutilated by the winds, blasted and burnt by the sun, and bearing a crop of small, inferior, wormy fruit, which are so common. Every field on the roadside speaks of our indifference to this subject. Who would not rather enjoy one good ripe peach of superior quality, than sit down to a peck of the little shriveled, blackened, sour things we so often see!

And yet how few there are who have any practical knowledge of the culture and propagation of the peach! What a common error to suppose that by planting the seed, we secure the same variety! How many there are, that suppose that a scion of a bearing tree will re-produce its kind! How many persons know that there are more than one hundred and fifty varieties of the peach, seven hundred of the pear, and over fifteen hundred of the apple. Yet the facts are so, and the number is increasing every day. How many of us understand the mysteries of budding, grafting and pruning! And how common it is, especially in the older homesteads and settlements, to see the peach tree trimmed up from the ground as high as a man can reach—its body a bare pole, the bark cracked and blistered by the sun, and its head a forest of long, bare, bony branches, bearing a scanty crop, or breaking down under its load of imperfect fruit! It is needless to extend these remarks at present. There is too much ignorance in the country. We all need advice and information. The subject has received so little attention, that there are none fully qualified to assume the position of teacher—yet, by an interchange of ideas, by imparting the information each one may possess—by giving the results of our experience and observation—by an interchange of different varieties, each exchanging with his neighbor—a great improvement may be effected, and our district may become a very garden in fruits and flowers. It is not assumed that the cultivation of fruit will ever be profitable in the way of dollars and cents; but it will heighten our enjoyments, occupy many a leisure hour, and add to the attractions of our homes.

This is what the Society proposes to accomplish. What if the day should come, when South Carolina, like Germany, should have her public highways lined with luscious fruit, expressly provided to refresh the traveler! When every barren hillside shall be planted with fruit trees, all rejoicing in the summer air, and turning their golden glories to the sun!

Every one may aid in this matter. It is understood that all are free to exhibit fruit. The terms of membership may be ascertained upon inquiry—and we trust that this effort to improve the quality of the great luxury of fruit will not be permitted to fail.—Unionville Journal. G.

THE MUMMY OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR.—It is stated that Colonel Rawlinson, who is prosecuting the discoveries commenced by Layard and Botta, and in exhausting from the mounds of the long lost rival cities of Nineveh and Babylon their instructive relics, has lately discovered, in a state of preservation, what is believed to be the mummy of Nebuchadnezzar. The face of the rebellious monarch of Babylon, covered by one of those gold masks usually found in Assyrian tombs, is described as very handsome—the forehead high and commanding, the features marked and regular. This interesting relic of remote antiquity is for the present preserved in the museum of the East India Company. Of all the mighty empires whose names have escaped oblivion, none has so completely perished as that of Assyria. More than two thousand years have gone by since the two "great cities," renowned for their strength, their luxury and their magnificence, have crumbled into dust, leaving no visible trace of their existence—their very sites forgotten. Even the name and the fame of the great Nebuchadnezzar might have been buried in the ruins of his splendid city, and forever obliterated from memory on earth, had not God made him a beacon to display his power, and illustrate the sin and folly of pride and vanity.

A chance traveler (Layard) riding through the Mesopotamian valley, discovered "the buried city," and with a success that will immortalize his name, has commenced to unroll the book of Assyrian history and civilization, which, of all the histories of the first period of the world, is most clearly connected with the subsequent destinies of the human race. The discoveries already made furnish ample testimony to refute the skeptic unbeliever of Scripture's truth.

On the evening of the day on which Mrs. Merchiston wrote to tell her husband that she designed to leave him, she came to my house. She looked white and shivering, but not with cold. Her poor blue eyes, so warm and kind, had a frosty glitter in them that was strange and sad.

"No answer," she kept repeating, "no answer—now. Now I must go."

I replied that everything was ready; our gig would be at the door in a minute; it was a bright moonlight night, and I myself would accompany her to my sister's house.

"It is not far—not so very far, Mrs. Rivers," I said, "not so far but that I can always hear of him, or—if he should be ill at any time—"

"You can come home at once,"

"Home!" she echoed pitiously. Then, as if stung into one desperate effort—the last struggle of her tender and feeble nature—she sprang into the gig, I following her.

I was scarcely seated, reins in hand—before I was determined that no other than myself should have the credit of eloping with Mrs. Merchiston—than I felt on my right arm a grasp like a vice.

"Mrs. Rivers, whom have you there? Is it your wife?"

"Yes, Dr. Merchiston," I cried, not in the least frightened by the look and tone; "yes, it is your wife. I am taking her where she will live—in peace, and not be killed by inches any longer. Stand aside; let me drive on."

"In one moment, pardon me," he passed in front of the horse to the other side. "Barbara? Is that you, Barbara?"

No words could describe the ineffable tenderness, the longing anguish, of that voice. No wonder that it made her grasp my arm, and cry wildly on me to stop.

"It is not ten minutes since I had your letter, Barbara, grant me one word in the presence of this lady, by whose advice you are leaving your husband."

"By whose advice did you leave your wife, Dr. Merchiston?" I began, boldly; but by the carriage lamp I caught sight of his face, and it seemed like that of a man literally dying—dying of despair. "Mrs. Merchiston, we will re-enter my house for a while. Doctor, you lift your wife down! She has fainted."

Soon the poor lady was sitting in my parlor, I by her side. Dr. Merchiston stood opposite, watching us both. He was neither violent nor reproachful, but perfectly silent. Nevertheless, I felt somewhat uncomfortable, and glad from my heart that James was safe ten miles off, and that I alone had been mixed up with this affair.

"She is better now, Mrs. Rivers. I may speak, sir."

"I will pass over my present trying position. Of course I perceive—in fact, I was already aware—that Mrs. Merchiston has acquiesced with our sad, inevitable estrangement."

"Why inevitable!—when there has been no quarrel on either side? When, cruel as you have been to her, she has never breathed a word to your discredit?" (He growled.) "When, as I understand, you have not the shadow of blame to urge against her?"

Before heaven, none. Have I not declared this, and will I not declare it before all the world? She knows I will.

"Then why, my dear sir, in the name of all that is good and honorable—why, even in the name of common sense, is your estrangement inevitable?"

He seemed to cower and shudder as before some inexpressible dread—once he glanced wildly round the room, as if with the vague idea of escaping. Finally, he forced himself to speak, with a smile that was most painful to witness.

"Mrs. Rivers, even though a lady asks me, I cannot answer that question."

"Can you if your wife herself asks it? I will leave you together."

As I rose to go, Dr. Merchiston interposed. The cold sweat stood on his brow; he looked—yes, I thought so at that moment—like a possessed man struggling with his inward demon.

"For God's sake, no! For the love of mercy, no! Stay by her; take care of her. I will speak in your presence; I will not detain you long."

"Do not see," for the poor wife was again insensible. Dr. Merchiston rushed to her side; he chafed her hands; he fell on his knees before her; but as she opened her eyes he crept away, and put the room's length between them.

"Now may I speak? You wished to leave me, Barbara. To go whither?"

I told him, concealing nothing. He seemed greatly shocked.

"Mrs. Rivers," he said at length, "such a scheme is impossible. I will never consent to it. If she desires, she shall leave my house for yours or any other. She shall have all the luxuries she pleases; she shall be as free from me as if I were dead and she a widow. But that my wife should quit my roof to earn her daily bread—never."

From this decision there was no appeal. The wife evidently desired none; her eyes began to shine with joy, and even I took hope.

"But, Dr. Merchiston, can there be no change? You loved one another once. Love is not yet dead; love never wholly dies. Surely—"

"Madame, silence!"

Could it be his voice that spoke—his once calm, low voice? I was now really terrified.

He rose and walked about the room; we two sat trembling. At last he stopped in his old position, with his hand on the mantelpiece.

"Mrs. Rivers, my extremely painful position—you will acknowledge it is such—must excuse anything in me unbecoming, unaccounted."

I assured him he had my free pardon for any excitement, and I hoped he felt calmer now.

"Perfectly, perfectly; you must see that, do you not?"

"I do," said I, with a sense of bitterness against the whole race of mankind, who can drive poor woman-kind almost out of their senses, while they themselves preserve the most sublime composure.

"I will now, with your permission and in your presence, speak to my wife, Barbara"—in a quiet equal tone, as if addressing an ordinary person—"I told you five years ago that it is not I who am inexorable, but fate, even if the life we then began to lead should last until my death. I repeat the same now. Yet, for those five years you have been at peace and safe. Safe," he repeated, with a slight pause, "under my roof, where I can shelter and protect you better than anywhere else."

"Protect her?" And then I told him—how could I help it? of the sights and outrages to which their manner of life had exposed her. It was terrible to see the effect produced on him.

"Hush! tell me no more, or—Barbara, forgive me—forgive me that I ever made you my wife. There is but one atonement; shall I make you my widow?"

"Doctor Merchiston," I cried, catching his arm, "are you mad?"

He started, shuddering, and in a moment had recovered all his self-control.

"Mrs. Rivers, this is a state of things most terrible, of which I was totally ignorant. How is it to be remedied—granting, as you must grant, the one unalterable necessity."

I thought a minute, and then proposed, to silence the tongue of all Apollate, that the husband and wife should openly walk to church together every Sunday, and kneel together in the house of God. And may I forgive me if in this scheme I had a deeper hope than I betrayed.

"I will do it," said Dr. Merchiston, after a pause. "Barbara, do you consent? Will you come home?"

"I will."

"But to the old life! In nothing changed—for changed it cannot, must not be!"

"Under any circumstances I will come home."

"Thank you; God bless you. It is better so."

There was a quiet pause, broken only by one or two faint sobs from her. At last they ceased. Dr. Merchiston took up his hat to depart. As he was going, his wife started up and caught him by the hand.

"Husband, one word, and I can bear all things. Did I—did you ever love me?"

"Love you? Oh, my little Barbara!"

"Do you love me?"

"Yes," in a whisper, sharp with intolerable pain; "yes."

"Then I do not mind anything. Oh, no, thank God! I do not mind."

She burst into hysterical laughter, and threw herself into my arms. It was only my arms she could come to—her husband was gone.

She went home as she had promised, and the old life began once more—without the slightest change, she told me—save that regularly on Sunday mornings he knocked at the door of communication between the double house, kept always locked on her side by his desire—that she found him waiting in the hall, and they walked arm in arm, as silently and sadly as mourners after a corpse, to the church door. In the same way returning, he immediately parted from her, and went his way to his own apartments.

Apollate was quite satisfied, and circulated innumerable explanations, which had probably as much truth in them as the former accusations.

Dr. Merchiston came as usual to play chess with my husband, and no allusion was ever made to the night which had witnessed so strange a scene in our house.

Mrs. Merchiston improved in health and cheerfulness. To a woman the simple conviction of being loved is support and strength through the most terrible ordeal. Once sure of that, her faith is infinite, her consolation complete. After his "yes," poor little Barbara revived like a flower in the sun.

Not so her husband. Everybody noticed that Dr. Merchiston was wasting away to a shadow. On Sundays especially, his countenance, always sallow and worn, seemed to have the ghastly look of one whom you know to be inwardly fighting a great soul battle. You feel at once the warfare will be won—but the man will die.

And still, as ever, of all the impenetrable mysteries that life can weave, that man and his secret were the darkest.

At least to me. Whether it was so to my husband, whose reserved habits and wide experience of human nature helped to make him what, thank Heaven, he always was—much wiser than me—I do not know but I often caught his grave penetrating eye intently fixed on Dr. Merchiston. So much so, that more than once the doctor moved from it restlessly. But Mr. Rivers redoubled his kindness—in truth, I never knew James, who was very undemonstrative, and usually engrossed between interest in his patients and his domestic affections, attach himself so strongly to any

male friend out of his own home, as he did to Dr. Merchiston.

He seized every opportunity to allure our neighbor from his morbid, solitary doings life to a more wholesome existence. They rode out together on the medical rounds—James trying to interest him in the many, many opportunities of philanthropy with which a country surgeon's life